Research in Biotechnology

233. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have launched a scheme for funding bio-technology research by small and medium organizations;

(b) if so, the details of the scheme and the status of its implementation; and

(c) the details of any other incentives that Government are planning for promoting research in biotechnology in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Department of Biotechnology has launched the new scheme "Small Business Innovation Research Initiative (SBIRI)" to promote public-private-partnership in the country. The SBIRI scheme will operate in two phases viz. SBIRI Phase-I which will cover highly risky, innovative, early stage, pre-proof-of-concept research and SBIRI Phase-ll is for late development and commercialization of innovative research leads. The advertisement seeking proposals under the scheme for private units was issued on 29th September 2005 in various Newspapers. The proposals received in response to the advertisement have been scrutinized by the Technical Screening Committee. The detailed information of the new scheme i.e. SBIRI is available on the Website of the department (www.dbtindia.org).

(c) The Indian biotech Industry is facilitated by the Government through different ways which include relief in custom duties on biotech products wherever necessary, permitting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) up to 100% in biotech sector, and keeping biotech industry out of compulsory licensing.

Quality of research

234. SHRI DATTA MEGHE: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the quality and quantity of science studies and research at the university level has been declining;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have proposals to set up new institutions devoted to science education and research;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether these institutions are proposed to be located and the time by which these institutions are likely to start functioning?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) and (b) Despite the growth of number of universities in India during the past fifty years, there has been a decline in the quality of science education and research. Some of the reasons for this decline are:—

- Poor Infrastructure
- Lack opportunities
- Limited funds
- Absence of an appropriate research environment

(c) to (e) The Government has approved setting up of two new institutions devoted to Science Education and Research to be named "Indian Institute of Science for Education & Research (USER)" to be located at Pune and Kolkata. It is proposed to start the courses from the academic session 2006.

Road proposals from Rajasthan

235. DR. GYAN PRAKASH PILANIA:Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Rajasthan have sent any proposals to convert some State Highways into National Highways and to widen certain existing National Highways;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of State Highways out of them for which Government have agreed to convert them into National Highways;